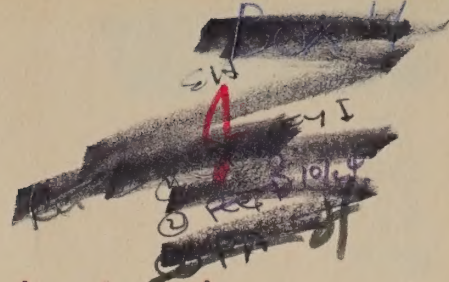


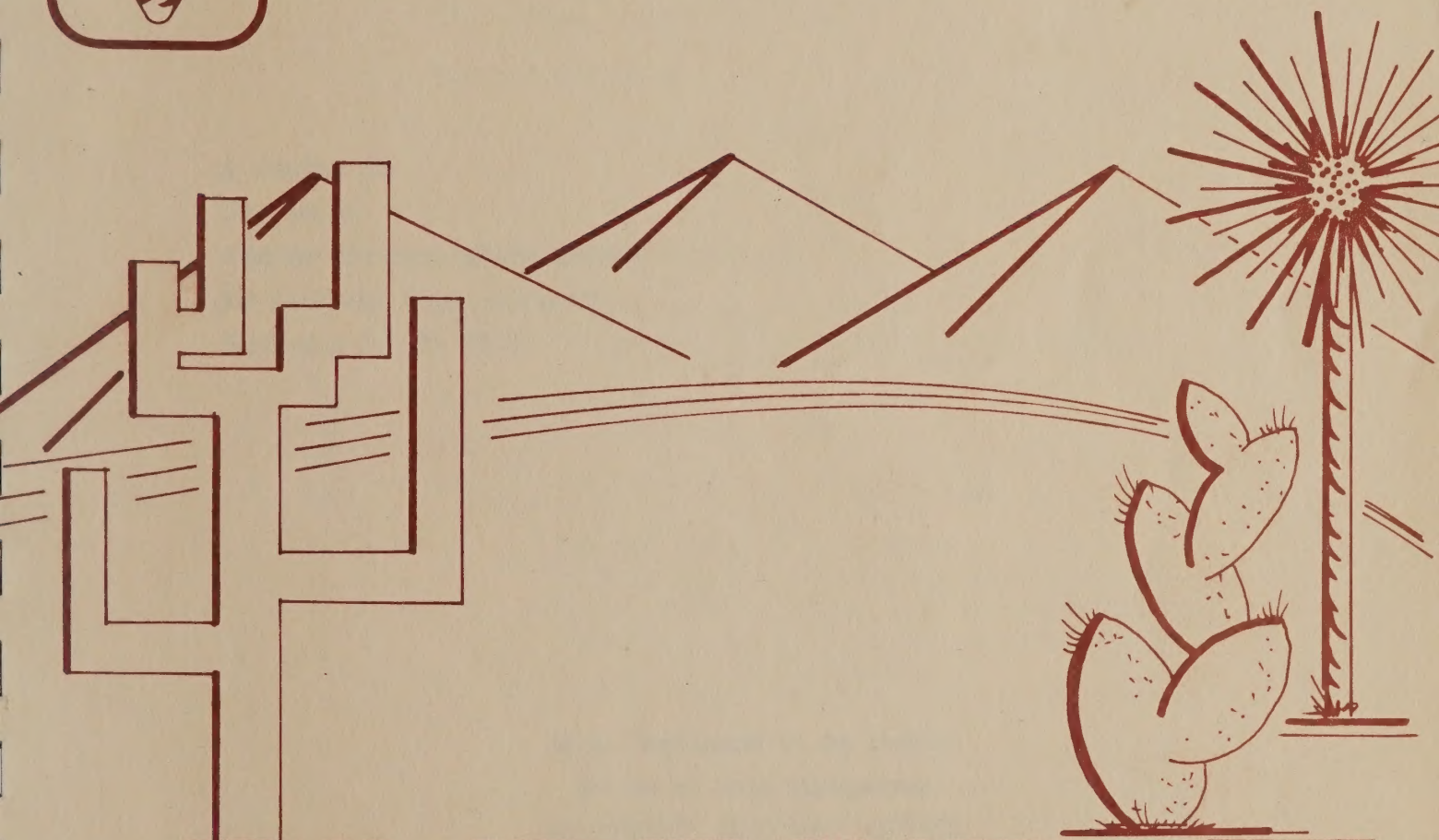


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United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT



RIVERSIDE DISTRICT

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THE RIVERSIDE DISTRICT

An Introduction and Update

A Briefing for

Guy Martin

Assistant Secretary of the Interior

for Land and Water Resources

September 29 - 30 1978

U. S. Department of the Interior

Bureau of Land Management

RIVERSIDE DISTRICT OFFICE

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Riverside, California

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THE RIVERSIDE DISTRICT

An Introduction and Update

A Special For
The District
Historical Society of the District
for Land and Water Resources
September 29-30, 1978

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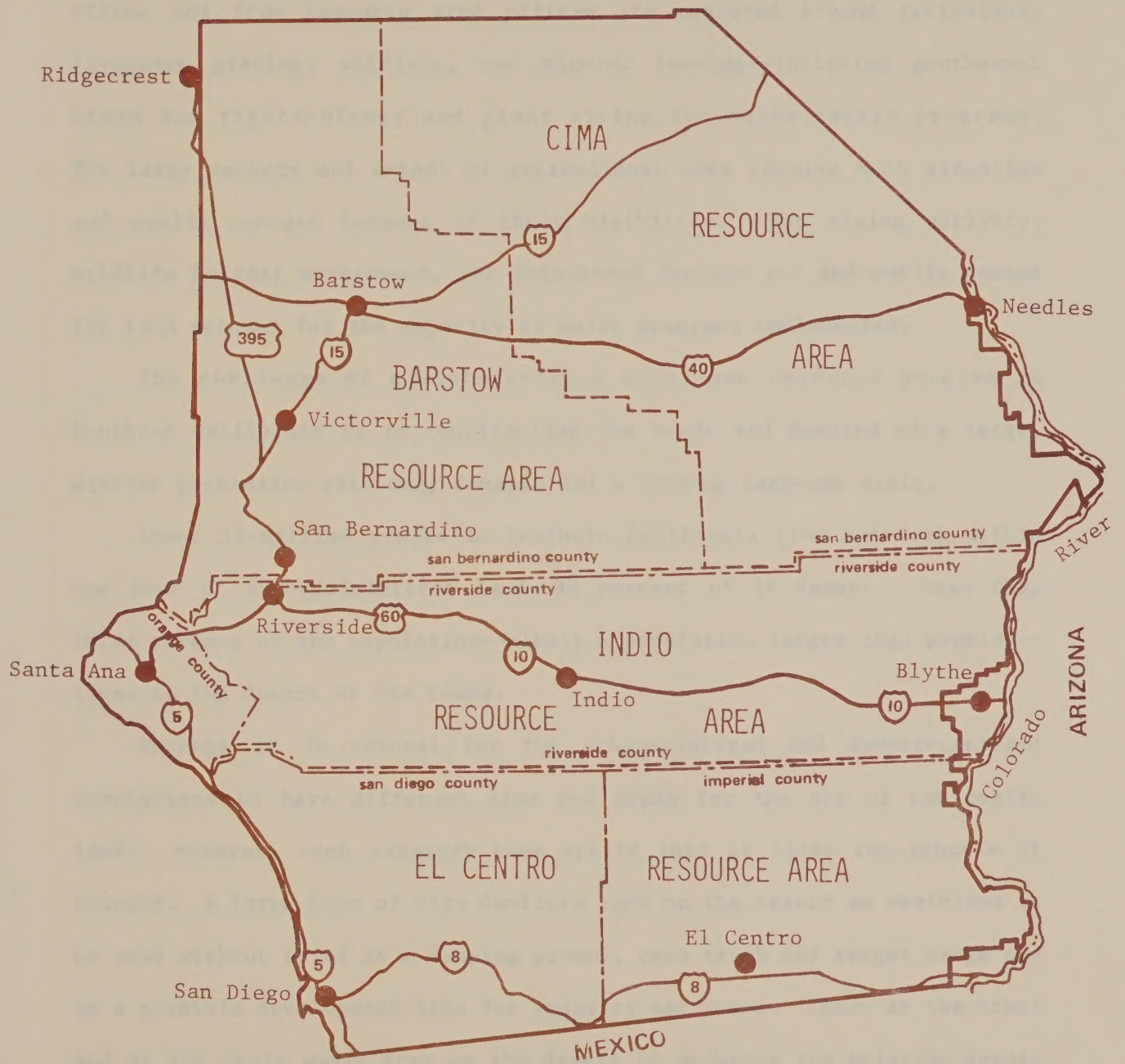
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OVERVIEW

Major resource programs administered from the Riverside District Office and from resource area offices are centered around recreation, livestock grazing, wildlife, and mineral leasing--including geothermal steam and rights-of-way and plant siting for major energy programs. The large variety and extent of recreational uses receive much attention and public concern because of their visibility. But mining activity, wildlife habitat management, the Endangered Species Act and public demand for land account for the majority of major programs implemented.

The challenge of administering a multi-use resource program in Southern California is in coordinating the needs and desires of a large, diverse population with many demands and a varying land-use ethic.

About 12-million people in Southern California live and work within one hour of BLM-administered land--98 percent of it desert. Less than three percent of the population--albeit a population larger than Wyoming--lives in the desert or its towns.

Perhaps it is natural for the urban-centered and desert-centered populations to have different aims and hopes for the use of the public land. However, each category then splits into at least two schools of thought. A large bloc of city dwellers look on the desert as wasteland to be used without stint as a dumping ground, race track and target range and as a possible development area for industry and power. Those at the other end of the scale would lock up the desert to preserve its pristine beauty and solitude. Likewise the dichotomy exists among desert dwellers. Many

view the land as theirs. Some would mine it or graze it but prefer to do without urban progress and outlanders. Others are captivated by the idea of tourism, money and rising real estate values.

The Riverside District oversees approximately 9.4 million acres of public land within Riverside, Orange, San Bernardino, Imperial, and San Diego Counties, an area bounded by Mexico, the Pacific Ocean, Arizona, Nevada and Death Valley. Within the District lie an additional 4.5 million acres of land administered by the National Park Service and Defense Department that include Joshua Tree National Monument, three Air Force bases, an Army base, two Navy bases, two Marine Corp bases, and several aerial gunnery and bombing ranges. The District administers about 9.2 million acres of BLM public land within the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) which was established under Section 601 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and is located in the counties of Imperial, Riverside, and San Bernardino. Approximately 185,000 acres of the District, predominately high chaparral type in San Diego County, lies outside the CDCA.

The District is divided into four resource areas: El Centro, Cima, Indio and Barstow. Barstow and El Centro Resource Areas have administrative offices in those cities. Area managers and their staffs for the Indio and Cima Resource Areas have offices in Riverside.

RESOURCES

Resource Programs within the Riverside District generally fall within nine broad categories: Lands and Realty, Minerals, Vegetation, Range,

Soil-Water-Air, Recreation-Scenic Quality, Wilderness Values, Cultural, and Wildlife.

LANDS. The lands resource in Riverside District includes major transportation corridors, exchange and lands consolidation programs and community service actions to support the growing residential areas of San Bernardino, Riverside, San Diego and Imperial Counties.

In recent years, vast areas of the California desert have become increasingly critical to the transmission and conveyance of goods and services between major metropolitan areas of the southwestern United States. Currently, Riverside District is crossed by four major freeways: Interstates 8, 10, 15 and 40. Corridors for electrical transmission and pipeline facilities are among the largest and longest in the western United States. They include: Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, Southern California Edison, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, San Diego Gas and Electric, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Imperial Irrigation District. Trunk lines of the Union Pacific, Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads have long occupied rights-of-ways and land grants in a checkerboard pattern and are interspersed with public lands.

The lands resource and related programs in the Riverside District are among the largest and most diverse within BLM. Future demands anticipate major energy-related development in the 9.4 million acres of the Riverside District, but will also be the principal support element in withdrawing or exchanging lands needed to assure the continued conservation and preservation of selected areas in the desert. Currently there are

approximately 250 backlog lands cases filed in Riverside District. These cases contribute a significant workload to the total district program.

MINERALS. Minerals have long constituted one of the principal resources of the desert. Many millions of dollars worth of "locatable" minerals, such as gold, silver, zinc and iron ore, have been mined over the years and activity continues. The mining of such nonmetallic commodities as talc, feldspar, clay, borate, and silica, as well as many "rare earth" elements, is widespread, and extraction activities are spreading rapidly. Recently, promising new strikes of gold have been reported. "Leasable" minerals include phosphate and sodium salts. Materials such as sand and gravel, building stone and fill material are referred to as "saleable" minerals.

National attention has been focused on the California desert area as the emphasis on planned energy grows. One substantial geothermal area is presently being developed, and several smaller sites have been located. Numerous proposed power generating sites, both thermal and nuclear, are being analyzed for possible construction during the next ten years. Many are on public lands, and all would involve transmission lines crossing public lands.

VEGETATION. There are more than 700 species of flowering plants in the Riverside District, with more than 200 that are found only in the California desert and at least 30 being indigenous to the area. Many plant species have been proposed for the Endangered Species Act listing.

RANGE. Approximately 2.5 million acres are leased for cattle and sheep grazing under Section 15 of the Taylor Grazing Act, with 64 operators currently authorized to graze on both perennial and ephemeral leases.

There are approximately 65,000 animal use months (AUM's) per year; however, on good years AUM production can increase due to the ephemeral situation. Last year, better than normal seasonal rainfall in Southern California produced good forage, allowing for Riverside District to issue leases to northern sheep operators who were experiencing a severe drought.

Grazing in the desert area will be covered in the Environmental Impact Statement done on the Comprehensive Desert Plan to be completed in 1980. Resource inventory work is presently in progress in the McCain Valley area of San Diego County to complete the grazing environmental statement due the latter part of 1981. Grazing use in western Riverside County and the Otay/Houser portion of San Diego County will be covered in an Environmental Statement to be completed in 1982-83.

The District is plagued with an excessive burro population which creates problems with the ecosystem, especially as it relates to vegetation and water for wildlife and livestock grazing. (See section on Wild Horse and Burro program.)

SOIL-WATER-AIR. The California desert environment and its resources, particularly certain species of rare and endangered wildlife, plants and fish, are seriously threatened by the desert's growing air

problem and by soil and water erosion. Soil-impact studies to determine the effect of surface disturbance by vehicles are periodically run along with soil strength tests at various intervals following rain storms.

RECREATION-SCENIC QUALITY. Approximately 12 million people live within an hour drive of the southern California desert. The area is described as "the world's largest contiguous area" of dispersed, high-intensity recreation. It is estimated that 9-12 million visitor-use-days of activity occur on public land in the CDCA. Adjacent desert areas also receive heavy use. Activity includes motorcycle racing, dune bugging, jeeping, sightseeing, camping, hunting, fishing, picniking, nature study, photography, painting, hiking, backpacking, rockhounding, and sandsailing. With this diverse activity, sensitivity to others values often conflict, thus signifying that public land management is of utmost importance.

WILDERNESS VALUES. The California desert contains some of the most outstanding and diverse examples of desert wilderness in existence. Several of these are being considered for inclusion in the Federal Wilderness System. (See special Wilderness section.).

CULTURAL. The District contains many cultural sites ranging from prehistoric to historic and from rock rings to WWII military installations. Desert archaeology sites are usually fragile surface sites. Site types include, among others, rock shrines, sleeping circles, intaglios, petroglyphs, pictographs and lithic and ceramic scatters.

Historic sites portray the Western pattern of the past 250 years: Indian trails and encampments, paths of conquistadores and padres,

outposts of mountainmen, routes of the Mormons, soldiers forts, roadways of expressmen, mine shafts, roadbeds of old railroads, early highway remains, military training bases.

WILDLIFE. The District encompasses a wide variety of habitats which support a great diversity of wildlife. There are about 450 species of vertebrates, more than 300 of which are birds. Some of the more glamorous ones are the bighorn sheep, desert tortoise, Mojave ground squirrel, feral burro, Coachella Valley fringe-toed lizard, Couch's spadefoot toad, Bendire's thrasher, Mojave chub, prairie falcon, roadrunner and desert kit fox.

The District has recently completed three habitat plans covering McCain Valley, Santa Rosa Mountains, and the Mojave Chub located at Ft. Soda near Baker.

RESOURCE AREA PROGRAMS

INDIO RESOURCE AREA. A major portion of activity in the Indio Resource Area revolves around energy-related items. The Sundesert nuclear plant was proposed near Blythe with transmission line corridors through Riverside, Imperial, and San Diego Counties. Palo Verde, Vidal, and Rice power plant sitings propose using either coal or nuclear fuel, probably one of which will be built to meet 1995 energy needs in Southern California.

Other energy-related items include the proposed SOHIO pipeline from Long Beach to Midland Texas through Riverside County. The Southern Pacific Pipeline Company is proposing a petroleum fuel pipeline from Colton to Yuma. Several oil and gas lease applications involve the North Salton Sea Area.

Minerals-related activities include considerable interest in building stone, sand and gravel as construction continues at a rapid pace in Southern California. An increased interest in uranium has stepped up exploration activity in Riverside and adjacent counties.

An area of unique environmental concern and habitat management is the Santa Rosa Mountains which contain the most significant population of peninsular bighorn sheep in California. This effort, being accomplished through close coordination with the California Department of Fish and Game, provides a particular challenge because of fragmented land patterns. The bighorn sheep habitat is in conflict with urban expansion in the Palm Springs area where a large portion has been annexed to the city for residential development; working relationships can be critical because of demands placed on public land.

BARSTOW RESOURCE AREA. The Barstow Resource Area is responsible for administration of approximately two-million acres of public lands within a boundary area of approximately five-million acres in western San Bernardino County adjacent to the Los Angeles basin. Almost all of the 120,000 desert residents of San Bernardino County live within the area. Only 25 percent of these residents live in the three incorporated cities of Barstow, Victorville and Adelanto.

Special problems and issues in the Resource Area include (1) power plant siting; (2) power transmission corridors; (3) a fragmented land ownership pattern, creating an extremely heavy demand on realty transactions such as rights-of-way and contributing to a large occupancy trespass situation; (4) substantial and growing mining and prospecting

activity that will become extremely sensitive when surface management regulations are final and wilderness study area interim management becomes reality; (5) increasing tensions with unorganized ORV groups as their activities become increasingly restricted because of the Endangered Species Act, Antiquities Act and Wilderness Act requirements. These tensions are evidenced by increasing sympathy for an unauthorized Barstow to Las Vegas motorcycle trail ride; (6) protection of wilderness characteristics may require constant surveillance and patrol in some of these areas; (7) substantial amounts of resource damage from vandalism, theft and lack of environmental awareness.

Special features and items of interest in the Barstow Resource Area include the Barstow Way Station, BLM's only visitor center which has been the home of the "Old Woman" meteorite for a number of months prior to its being transported to the Smithsonian Institution.

The Barstow Resource Area hosts a myriad of recreational activities, including sand sailing, gyrocoptering, amateur rocket launching, ORV events, rock hounding, climbing, and backpacking. Permits are issued for an average of about 80 competitive ORV events each year. Numerous TV program segments, TV commercials and full length movies are filmed in the desert and dry lakes, particularly El Mirage. Permits are issued by the area office, coordinated with Hollywood agents and producers. Rangers in the outlying Barstow area must be on the lookout for stray live ordnance because of the proximity of Marine Corps bombing and artillery ranges. The Barstow Resource Area has one known Geothermal Resource Area.

Some of the most beautiful displays of wildflowers appear in the

Barstow area. Profuse blooms of selected annuals including Canterbury bells, wild heliotrope, and desert marigold appear in late March and April. The many cactus varieties draw sightseers to the Barstow area on a regular basis for the many spectacular displays. Cactus blooming period is late April and May.

Ephemeral forage, available during good rainfall years in the Barstow desert region, provides quality forage for sheep grazing. As an example, in a normal year like 1975, about 15,600 sheep were licensed. During 1977 when northern California experienced a drought, exceptional rains in the Mojave Desert region provided an extra amount of forage for grazing 109,305 sheep.

CIMA RESOURCE AREA. The Cima Resource Area continues to operate out of Riverside offices. However, before spring one ranger will be stationed in Needles and one will be patrolling out of Baker. Both are now on-board in Riverside. Decentralization to Needles is currently under consideration.

In energy and minerals, Ivanpah Oil and Gas has interest in 120,000 acres, and more than 50 non-competitive lease applications are in for geothermal activity. Free-use permits have been issued CalTrans for aggregate for freeway construction and resurfacing. The Bureau of Reclamation is hauling riprap for Colorado River projects. Sodium and potassium from three dry lakes is under lease in eight operations. Active mining is going on in four iron mines and numerous clay, talc and gypsum sites. There are an estimated 3,000 mining claims in the area.

Land use has produced a variety of problems, including more than 50 occupancy trespass cases. Discussion between Department of the Interior

and Department of Defense continues regarding the former accepting turn-over of an eastern portion of Marine Corps Base, Twenty-Nine Palms, without a clean up of all ordnance. Powerlines through the area are being upgraded. Though some progress has been made, cactus and yucca rustling continues, and on a large scale.

About two-million acres are leased for grazing, amounting to 52,000 animal-use-months. Ear-tagging has been an excellent method of controlling unauthorized usage. Last year's roundup brought in 321 wild burros. An estimated 2,000 burros still inhabit the rangelands, increasing 20 percent annually.

The area features three major campgrounds, and the Dumont Dunes ORV open area holds 500 to 1,000 camp units on holidays. ORV trespass is quite prevalent at times, but six ORV closed areas are being consistently maintained. Cima has two to three million acres of "possible" Wilderness study area with large concentrations of prehistoric and historic cultural resources and three national landmarks.

EL CENTRO RESOURCE AREA. Because of ease of access for nearby recreationists and the economic interests of Imperial Valley residents, several areas around El Centro are receiving close attention from the media, various pressure groups and the general public.

The Imperial Sand Dunes to the east accounts for more than 25 percent of the entire District's visitor-use-days and is probably BLM's most intensive use area nationally. The Dunes are overcrowded, littered and vandalized. Recent publicity over possible rare and endangered species of plant and wildlife has divided the populace on the issues.

The possible designation of the Dunes as critical habitat for the Andrew's dune scarab beetle has caused much comment as has the study of the flat-tailed horned lizard. Likewise, the popular McCain Valley in San Diego County has been the target of vandalism and there the declining numbers of the rare peninsular bighorn sheep have caused concern. Studies of about 40 rare plants are being carried out in those two areas.

El Centro has a serious illegal-occupancy and trespass problem. Most involve illegal use of mining claims and may number 350 cases in San Diego County alone. Theft of sand, gravel and other materials is also prevalent, but few are documented, since material sale administration has been only recently assigned to BLM from USBR.

Treaties with Mexico and the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Act of 1974 necessitate an increase in fresh water allowance to Mexico. Five alternate methods are under study. All but one will have an impact on public lands in the area.

Filming trespass and the costs of filming in desert locations has become an issue. Some producers have gone elsewhere to the consternation of the Brawley Chamber of Commerce which encourages the use of county land. Often, then, the activities impinge on state or federal public land.

Imperial County is the District's center for geothermal power interest and activity. More than 130,000 acres have been leased or are pending. The first commercial production on a federal lease should begin early next year when Magma's 10Mw plant begins production in the East Mesa. Republic's 48Mw plant will follow. Important leases are pending

in the northeast Salton Sea area. Experts forecast a potential of 2,000Mws by 1990, but technical and "social" problems must be overcome. The social problem revolves around power-line siting in the Imperial Valley which can affect aerial operations related to the intensive agriculture industry there.

The projected Yuha Visitor Center near Ocotillo is proceeding on schedule and should be completed late next year. The 5,000-square-foot facility, located 25 miles west of the Area office, will feature a 30-seat "orientarium" along with numerous exhibits and demonstrations.

The El Centro office develops and carries out intensive environmental education programs with the public: "Desert Awareness" activities for recreationists, teacher workshops, community recycling programs, environmental study areas.

DISTRICT PERSONNEL

Type Appointment	Authorized	On Board	Vacancies
Permanent	89	75	14
Permanent Part-Time	5	3	2
WAE	18	13	5
Temporary	<u>19</u>	<u>13</u>	<u>6</u>
Total for District:	170	132	38

CURRENT PROGRAMS

WILDERNESS. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) directed that lands under BLM jurisdiction be inventoried and evaluated for wilderness potential, and that recommendations be made to Congress on areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System.

The California Desert Conservation Area was established by FLPMA to provide a comprehensive desert-wide management plan to Congress by September 30, 1980. The short time-frame required that wilderness be evaluated in the Conservation Area in time to be considered in the desert-wide plan. BLM's Wilderness Program, beginning April 19, 1978, was divided into three phases: inventory, study, and report to Congress. The inventory phase now underway ends in February, 1979, with the recommendations that certain areas within the desert meet the 2(C) criteria of the Wilderness Act of 1964, and need further study. The Study Phase following will conclude with recommendations to Congress on areas for inclusion in the National Wilderness Preservation System. The Reporting Phase then begins, and will, based upon the President's decisions, recommend to Congress certain areas for final wilderness designation.

The inventory phase began in May to identify roadless tracts contiguous with wilderness areas or those containing more than 5,000 acres of public lands. A road was defined as: "an access route which has been improved and maintained by using hand or power machinery or tools to insure relatively regular and continuous use. A way maintained solely by passage of vehicles does not constitute a road." Other characteristics: an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, undeveloped, primeval, culturally valuable and that furnishes opportunity for solitude.

During May, 1978, 17 public meetings were held state-wide to explain the procedures for the Wilderness inventory. Also a field inventory team began coordinating existing information and public input and making field reviews of the areas to develop an interim inventory map. Narrative descriptions for each numbered section described the findings and rationales.

Between August 1-15, the Wilderness coordinator met with the representatives of certain interest groups to preview the map and explain the coming workshops.

In early August a mailing list of 3,400 was notified of impending workshops, and general news releases pinpointed dates, times and places. On August 18, interim Wilderness inventory maps were mailed to the mailing list. The maps and accompanying literature showed possible wilderness areas according to the set criteria and public input. This began the 30-day comment period.

Between August 28 and September 7, 1978, 12 open-house workshops were held state-wide to receive additional public input to the map. Considerable newspaper and T.V. interest was noted. The use of traveling teams and the small-group approach was seen as effective by all participants.

The draft Wilderness map and area narratives will be available November 1, when the 90-day formal comment and public review period begins. Public meetings for formal comments will be held in ten cities from December 4-15.

The projected schedule into 1979: February 1, close of 90-day comment period on draft map and narratives; February 21, final map and

narrative to BLM State Director; February 28, transmittal of final approved documents to Desert Plan Staff; official notices of availability of documents and publication in the Federal Register; Wilderness study phase will begin as part of the overall CDCA plan.

RANGERS. The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, (FLPMA) called for BLM "to provide a uniformed desert ranger force" in the California Desert Conservation Area, whose members shall have law enforcement authority. In order to comply with FLPMA, and Interior's Departmental Manual, members of the previous "Desert Ranger" force were given the option of becoming law enforcement "BLM Rangers" or moving into other positions.

Those who remained, plus other Rangers hired subsequently, attended the eight week Basic Police School in Glynco, Georgia, obtained a law enforcement physical exam, and received a Civil Service "critical-sensitive" background clearance. The Riverside District currently has Rangers assigned as follows:

District Office	
District Staff Ranger	1
Barstow Resource Area	
Chief Area Ranger	1
Rangers	3
Cima Resource Area	
Chief Area Ranger	1
Rangers	2
El Centro Resource Area	
Chief Area Ranger	1
Rangers	4
Indio Resource Area	
Ranger	<u>1</u>
Total:	14

Rangers are devoting their time to a combination of patrol in established sectors, and program development. Patrols have two broad

objectives, visitor service and resource protection. Visitor service includes search and rescue, first aid, directions and explanations, enforcement, informal and formal public relations and education. Rangers detect and inventory resource values and protect against vandalism, theft, fire and other damage to resources. They also check construction and trespass. Program development involves improvement or development of policies, procedure and reporting systems. A manual supplement for the Ranger program has been developed.

The present Ranger force is only a good beginning for what is needed to enforce the laws and regulations as identified in FLPMA.

CALICO SITE. Administration of the Calico Early Man Site, on public land northeast of Barstow, has been discontinued by San Bernardino County and will be taken over by BLM. Tentatively 70,000 years old, the site undergoes regular archaeological exploration and may prove to hold the earliest known remains of man in the Western Hemisphere. Up to 10,000 tourist, scholars and volunteer workers a year visit the "dig".

Dr. Leaky, an internationally known archaeologist, has visited the site and indicated it is significant as it relates to early inhabitants in North America.

YOUNG ADULT CONSERVATION CORPS. YACC, established by Public Law 95-93, is a program to provide year-round jobs for unemployed, out-of-school, young men and women, ages 16 through 23, in conservation work on public lands. The program is a tripartite arrangement of the Departments of Labor, Agriculture and Interior. Enrollees receive the minimum Federal

wage with higher rates available for those in supervisory functions.

At the present time, BLM is responsible for the operation of a nonresidential camp located at Riverside. It is only partially operational, having started in mid-August.

Associated with the camp are two partially operational satellite camps in El Centro and Barstow. Total enrollment to date is 48 young people engaged in support activities: vegetation and wildlife preservation, management, and improvement; recreational facilities development, rehabilitation and maintenance; natural disaster damage control and cleanup; hazard reduction; and firecrew augmentation.

When fully operational, the Riverside District YACC Camp will have a staff of 15 and an enrollee strength of approximately 175 to 200 young people. Additional satellite camps will be located at Needles, Indio and Twenty-Nine Palms. Further expansion of the camp and its responsibilities is possible.

WILD HORSE AND BURRO PROGRAM. Over 2,000 wild burros graze public lands in the District. Last fall 321 were gathered in the Lava Beds. With a 20 percent annual increase, the roundup did not equal the 1977 increase. Largest concentrations are in the mountains of the East Mojave Unit, along the Colorado River and in the military withdrawals. In virtually all cases the burros compete for forage and water with native bighorn sheep, and in several cases with domestic livestock. The Lava Beds roundup, while a very intensive water trapping operation, took off only about 60 percent of the burros in that area.

Over the last two years BLM wild horse and burro roundups in California, Oregon, Nevada and other states have placed many animals under

the Adopt-A-Horse Program. Over 1,000 of these animals have come to Southern California and are the responsibility of the Riverside District. The presence of a quasi-official distribution center in Escondido, near San Diego, has contributed to the large numbers placed here. Most animals have found good homes, but BLM has been faced with nagging problems of enforcement related to improper care, mistreatment and abandonment. We have a close working relationship with the Humane Society which has helped with enforcement and three convictions have been obtained. Currently two horses and two burros are being held for re-adoption in San Diego by the Humane Society. BLM recently hired a full time employee, formerly of the Humane Society, to work on confirming "foster-home" facilities prior to adoption and to do follow-up checks. Over a man-year of time, plus feed, vet fees, and stabling costs are involved in maintaining this program.

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Southern California and are the responsibility of the Riverside District.
The presence of a great official distribution center in Riverside.
Over 100,000 have been contributed to the large number of people here. Most
animals have found good homes, but 800 have been taken with tagging
products of volunteer related to proper care, education and
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Over a one-year of time, plus feed, vet fees, and stabling costs are
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